



Hervé Ladsous
Under-Secretary-General
Department of Peacekeeping Operations
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Near Verbatim Transcript

Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq: USG Ladsous is here to brief on a range of peacekeeping activities. He will make a short statement first and then we will take your questions after which we will do the second part of the briefing following his presentation. Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, welcome.

Opening Remarks:

Thank you very much and good morning, or afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I thought it would be timely to get together for a while to tell you, before the General Assembly opens and all the movement that goes around it, what are our main concerns at this time. Let me start by saying that obviously this had been scheduled for some time already but of course there is a lot that has been happening or developing or being discussed about Syria.

Of course the situation is what we all know. It warrants, and deservedly so, considerable attention. The Secretary-General has talked about it so I will not go into the issue of Syria, because this is being discussed much elsewhere.

I would simply say that there are of course some related issues for peacekeeping having to do with the missions we have in the region, namely UNDOF on the Golan Heights, where we continue facing many difficulties because there are a lot of armed incidents in and around the area of operation of UNDOF. There are a number of things that we continue doing to first strengthen UNDOF. As you remember the Security Council requested us to regain the overall level that had been, historically, the level of staffing of UNDOF, which is around 1250 people. We have indeed taken in new Member

States as contributors to UNDOF. And of course we continue to adjust our posture on the ground according to events as they develop.

Let me take the opportunity to thank, through you, the countries who have accepted to join UNDOF, the latest being Ireland which is deploying a contingent this month.

We also are very much aware that the situation in the area of operation of UNIFIL, the southern part of Lebanon, has so far been rather quiet and we hope it continues this way. There again, our mission, our force, has taken steps to have the greatest awareness possible of what is happening and is adjusting its posture accordingly.

Now let me tell you that in fact many of our concerns nowadays have to do with various situations in Africa. I would like to highlight three in particular: the DRC, Mali and the Sudans.

DRC, as you have seen, we have experienced several weeks of substantial activity in the Kivus with the attack by M23 and subsequent action taken by the armed forces of the DRC, with the support of MONUSCO, and that includes the Force Intervention Brigade, which is still working to reach its established levels of staffing and equipment.

The net result has been that one very significant achievement was made: that the M23 group has been pushed back towards the north to such a place that it does not anymore pose the direct threat that it had posed for such a long time either on the city of Goma or on the surrounding IDP camps or indeed on the positions of MONUSCO. So that is something quite significant.

But at the same time we have to remember that the situation in eastern Congo and more generally in the Great Lakes area is first and foremost a political concept. We have to try and address those reasons that for so many years have been the cause for such intense suffering of the people, so many rapes, children being enrolled in armed groups and so on.

And indeed diplomacy has become again the order of the day, when all the special envoys for the region, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the American Special Envoy also, spent the whole week last week together, travelling to the region and then attending the Great Lakes Summit convened by President Museveni on the 5th of September.

And you would have seen the results of those meetings which are first and foremost an urgent request to M23 to forgo any further military action. Also the resumption of the Kampala talks between M23 and the Congolese Government sponsored by the Government of Uganda. And of course the

need to continue pushing ahead on finding all the solutions that are called for by the agreement, the framework agreement signed earlier this year.

There will be on the 23rd of September a special event in the margins of the General Assembly to take stock of the situation, as was scheduled by the agreement twice a year. And so there will be, I do believe, a good attendance to measure the progress made on all fronts. Regionally of course this conference, this Summit in Kampala last week, was very significant. But also in the Congo you will have seen that President Kabila launched the national dialogue only a few days ago. That was something he had promised to do, plus the other internal reforms that need to be taken care of in the DRC.

But also there are all the mechanisms that come in to play and one result of last week was that now the UN, through MONUSCO, are a full fledged member of the verification mechanism of the Great Lakes countries. So I think we will be able to get a much clearer picture of what is happening through this mechanism, to adjudicate, if needed, on to the accusations that shelling took place from one side to the other side.

I would remind you that as part of the setting of the Intervention Brigade we do intend to have the UAVs for observation purpose actually flying over the Kivus in the last month of the year.

So this is the situation, you know, it was a bit worrying three weeks ago but I think we are making progress.

The second country I would like to come and brief you about is Mali, where I think the phrase remains "so far, so good". The Presidential election went well, Prime Minister appointed, Government installed a few days ago and now we have to work for the implementation, I mean the authorities in Mali have to work, with our support, for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement of the 18th of June, in terms of making progress on national reconciliation. There are already some contacts and initiatives taken, and working with all that we know, the security sector reform, the various institutional reinforcements that have to be made.

From our side we remain more than ever in full support of the efforts that the Government of Mali has announced, whilst we are strengthening MINUSMA. We had as of yesterday 5,201 soldiers on the ground, plus a little over 800 policemen. We have to continue working towards the equipment of these African troops while we are working on speeding up the arrival of other troop contributors, notably from Asia but also other parts of Africa, also from Latin America.

So it is a continuous effort but one I think that so far looks promising. But

clearly this is only one stage in a process where the ultimate goal is to address those root causes that have brought about the situation we have been witnessing for the last 18 months in that country. Needless to say, the regional perspective has to be taken into account. Sahel is of course a very important issue in and of itself and there will be again a side event in the margins of the General Assembly to take stock.

Finally let me touch briefly on the Sudans, where we have witnessed yet again some of that yo-yo, you know - at one stage things are better, then they get worse again. We know the issues and we know that they cannot be addressed definitively in a short period of time.

I think right now today we are in a positive phase. The meeting last week between President Salva Kiir and President Bashir in Khartoum somewhat cleared the way. I think the agreement by Khartoum to suspend *sine die* the threat to cut the flow of oil was a very significant decision, one that contributes to increased confidence.

Yet there remains a number of issues. One of the more difficult ones remains the issue of Abyei where no clear solution is yet in sight, with the request by one side for a referendum being held next week, next month, sorry, and some activity on the ground. But all this has to be worked upon and the African Union is continuing through former President Mbeki, with our close support, remarkable work.

We hope that the border mechanisms, that are becoming operational, will contribute towards less tension in that border area. And of course both countries have to address their internal problems.

The situation in Darfur, in the Sudan, is clearly not a good one. We now have had almost 300,000 more displaced persons since the beginning of this year and that's not good. Violence is between ethnic groups, tribes, various economic interests.

And also in South Sudan, where there has been some inter-tribal fighting in the state of Jonglei.

I visited both the Sudan and South Sudan in July. I went to Jonglei and clearly the difficulties there are immense. But I think with serious determination by the Government in Juba to try to do its utmost to prevent tribal fighting, and if also we can get better means to address the issue of mobility in a huge area which I saw from my eyes. It is just one immense big swamp. This all is very complicated. I think we have to be watching this.

But I think globally the bilateral relationship between Sudan and South Sudan is again experiencing a more positive phase today and it is to be commended.

Final remark, you know my concern for the safety of our people and sadly enough we have had yet more victims. We had victims in eastern Congo; we had victims in Darfu and elsewhere. That is always very sad. I take this opportunity to express my admiration, my gratefulness to the countries who contribute towards giving us the people that we need, but it is an unfortunate fact of life. Thank you.

Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq: Thanks very much. Under-Secretary-General Ladsous has another commitment shortly after this. So we will be able to take about ten minutes for questions. So if you could please keep your questions short and identify yourself, and please speak into the microphone. Yes Pam.

Question (Pamela Falk, CBS News): Thank you, it's Pamela Falk. Thank you on the behalf of the UN Correspondents Association for briefing us, and welcome. My question is about, if you don't mind, one quick question about Syria. If the Security Council does authorize something, in terms of either peacekeeping force to protect the OPCW workers or to protect the facilities, is DPKO prepared either to create a peacekeeping force or create, or work with contributing countries to create a guard force as there was in Iraq? That's one. And on DRC, can you give us an update on US Special Envoy Feingold and his recent trip? Thank you.

USG Ladsous: Well on your first question I can only say we are completely in the hands of Security Council. Right now I know that a number of ideas have been mentioned but I have no sense that there is a decision forthcoming immediately. But of course, we are under orders of the Council and if we are requested to do something we shell act accordingly.

I will simply remind you that for quite a bit of time now we have been doing some planning, in order to be able to react if the Security Council were to ask for us for a peacekeeping force, under certain conditions, of course, if conditions in Syria would to allow.

Now in connection with this particular issue of chemical warfare, I think, it would be simply imprudent of me to comment. But if we asked to do something we shell try our best, of course, to address it with the support of contributing countries.

Regarding Senator Feingold, I did mention that he took a part, and a very active part, in this joint action by all four special envoys last week travelling throughout the countries of the region, participating actively in the Kampala

summit. I think it is very useful that all these four entities: the African Union, United States and, of course, the UN, Mrs. Robinson, we see as speaking as one voice and acting as one. So we welcome that very much.

Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq: Yes Edie.

Question (Edith Lederer, Associated Press): Thank, thank you Mr. Ladsous. I'd liked to ask you if you can elaborate a little more on Congo and what's happening with the M23. You said that they have been pushed back significantly to the north. Did they suffer serious casualties? Is there a sense that their fighting capabilities have been degraded in any way? And is MONUSCO keeping a force near them to ensure that they don't come back down near the Goma area?

USG Ladsous: I think it is fair to say that, yes, M23 has suffered casualties. That is, I think, the reason why they pushed back, you know, to presumably, you would say, to lick their wounds. Of course, no surprise, that is when they said, well, we want to push the negotiations with the Government of Congo.

So these have resumed in Kampala and I think everybody supports that. MONUSCO, for its part, has firmly strengthened its positions, to be in a better position to defend Goma and all the populations that are in or around the area. And, of course, as I said the Intervention Brigade is building up. We are expecting large batches of supplementary soldiers. Equipment is being lifted up. But even though the Brigade was not engaged as such in the recent bout of fighting they were part of the action and, I think, they did well.

An important element is that whereas until maybe a month ago the population in Goma were very critical of MONUSCO, now it is a very different picture. When he opened a national dialogue in Kinshasa few days ago, President Kabila actually expressed his gratitude to the United Nations and to MONUSCO specifically, for the stand they had taken and the results they brought about. Again in conjunction and in support of the FARDC to achieve those results. Now we have to continue working towards consolidating that.

Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq: Yes Sherwin.

Question (Sherwin Bryce-Pease, South Africa Broadcasting Corporation): Mr. Ladsous, my question is about Central African Republic. How concerned are you at the slow pace with which the Security Council is responding to the recommendation of the Secretary-General in terms of targeted sanctions against various factions in the country? And are you concerned that we are heading into a failed State like Somalia, a failed State

where you will then be required in the long term to have another full fledged peacekeeping mission in Africa?

USG Ladsous: Let me say first that the situation in Central African Republic is dramatic. The amount of violations of all sorts of rights, the amount of suffering by the population, with (inaudible) of State which in many ways has disappeared. The army, the police, the judiciary, all that has basically ceased to exist. So I think it is something that indeed the international community has to address.

Of course, right now the initiative belongs, aside from the Security Council, was taken up by, on the ground, the Community of Central African States and the African Union. There is the proposed deployment of what is called the AFISM-CAR which is an African mission of about 3,500.

Well, BINUCA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, my dear old friend General Gaye, are doing all they can.

But without making hypotheses, it is not my role, we of course will probably be called upon to support their work and, possibly, at some stage, to become more actively involved. But I will only, at this stage, say that definitely the issue needs to be addressed.

Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq: We have time for one last question. Michelle.

Question (Michelle Nichols, Reuters): Thank you for doing this. A question on DRC: initially the UAVs were supposed to be in the air in August. What caused the delay to December? And on Mali, do you think, with the situation seemingly a little bit more stable, do you think you will still need to build the force up to the 12,600 strength or do you think you could get by with less than that?

USG Ladsous: On your first question, I think yes there has been some delay, much to my *chagrin*. But this has to do with the rules that member states have made, as far as procurement is concerned. It is not a light affair, you know. The offers were that thick [indicating size with hand], several hundreds pages, if not thousands pages, of documents. And that is beyond our control. These are regular procurement rules. But I am pushing all I can, the deployment. There is a chain, is it not only the machines but also the transmission, the photo interpretation. It is rather complex. But the goal is definitely for the first days of December, and if we can shave that a little bit I will be only too happy.

Mali, I think we see a situation where basically there has been a surprisingly tolerant environment. There have been a few incidents, but very very few.

But of course we have to remain very vigilant. Even yesterday and today there were alerts. So it shows that nothing can be taken for granted.

So we will see as we go. But certainly if it appears that we can do with less than the Security Council has decided, which is by the way a ceiling, as you said, 11,200 soldiers 1,400 policemen. If it appears we can do the job with less, then we are trying our best to be fiscally responsible. But it will be an ongoing assessment, trying to be true to the principle I established since I came here, which is "right-sizing". And right-sizing can work both ways, but certainly if we can save our member states money because it doesn't appear indispensable, we will certainly do that.

Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq: Thanks very much. (inaudible) to those who didn't get a chance to ask a question, but I know that Under-Secretary-General Ladsous does have an appointment at 12:30. Thanks very much.

USG Ladsous: Thanks very much.

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